

BIOGRAPHY

WRITINGS, REPORTS,
AND RESEARCHES

OF

DR. C. L. BIRMINGHAM

WESTPORT



BROWNE AND NOLAN, LIMITED
DUBLIN ·· BELFAST ·· CORK ·· WATERFORD

1913



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ABSTRACTS OF
RESEARCHES

ON THE
NATURE OF THE



BY
J. H. WELLCOME

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ORIGINAL WORK, REPORTS, PAPERS, &c.

BY

C. L. BIRMINGHAM, M.D. (R.U.I., 1908), D.P.H.
(R.C.P. & S.I., 1902), M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O.
(R.U.I., 1903), L.M. (ROTUNDA).

Formerly House Surgeon Mater Misericordiæ Hospital, Dublin; Fellow of the Royal Institute of Public Health, ex-Fellow of the Royal Microscopical Society, Member Royal Sanitary Institute, Vice-President (1907) Hygiene Section Conference of Royal Sanitary Institute, Member of Council (for several years) of Irish Medical Association; Medical Officer of Health to the Urban, Rural, and Port Sanitary Districts of Westport; Certifying Surgeon Under the Factories and Workshops Acts.

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1. 1895.—Introduced the Obstetrical Douche Sheet with pneumatic rim, intended to lessen the dangers of puerperal infection during parturition or during gynæcological operations. This form of appliance has since been adopted by workers in France, Germany, America, and other countries.

It was first publicly exhibited and demonstrated on by me at the London Congress of the British Medical Association, 1895.

2. 1898.—Paper on the "treatment of the Major Affections of the Respiratory System by Antiseptic Vapours."

This paper dealt principally with the treatment of Consumption by the continuous inhalation of antiseptic vapours, a method now extensively used.

The well-known Izal Vapouriser was invented by me.

Sheffield Med.-Chir. Soc. *Transactions*, 1898.

3. 1899.—Paper on "Gannister Disease," read by me at the Congress of the Royal Sanitary Institute held in Southampton, 1899.

This disease affects the lungs and closely resembles Consumption, though the Tubercle Bacillus is very rarely found to be present.

4. I invented the Water-motor Centrifuge for assisting in the discovery of Tubercle and other bacilli in Milk, a research I was then engaged on.

5. 1899.—Report on the "Incubation Period of Varicella," published in *British Medical Journal*, 1899.

6. 1900.—First Report on the Prevention of Consumption, submitted to the Westport District Council, who ordered 1,000 copies of it to be printed and distributed. It was nearly two years later before the Local Government Board issued their first circular letter dealing with this subject.

My Report was read March 1, 1900; the Local Government Board's circular was dated September 16, 1901. So far as I can ascertain

my Report of 1900 was the first exhaustive Report on Consumption presented to and adopted by any local authority in Ireland.

7. 1901.—Report presented to the Registrar-General for Ireland, on "The English Cold and Paddy-Houses." The English cold is really incipient phthisis contracted by unfortunate harvesters in England in consequence of the depression their health is subjected to by being housed in dark, ill-ventilated barns known as "Paddy-houses."
8. 1903.—Second Report on the Prevention of Consumption, presented to the Westport District Council, who ordered 1,000 copies of it to be printed and distributed.

This Report was subsequently adopted for use in the National Schools of Ireland, and 10,000 copies of it distributed to the several schools, by direction of the Commissioners of National Education.

9. 1904.—Report presented to the Westport District Council on the advantages of Vaccination against Small-pox. I also embodied in this Report a history of the development of the practice of Vaccination. For a reprint of this article, see pages 59-61 in my *Handbook of Irish Sanitary Law*.
10. 1904.—Report to the Local Government Board on an outbreak of Typhus Fever.
11. 1904.—Oxford Medical Congress. Paper on the Preparation and Uses of Tuberculin.

12. 1905.—Publication of my *Handbook of Irish Sanitary Law*. Browne & Nolan, Ltd., Dublin.
13. 1906.—Report to the Local Government Board on a further outbreak of Typhus Fever.
14. 1906.—Presented Report to District Council embodying information regarding method of Disinfection in use in every Hospital in Ireland.
15. 1907.—Introduced a new system of demonstrating the Tuberculosis bacilli in sputum, milk, etc., as well as in culture ; also the forms, grouping, etc., of various other disease producing germs, such as those of Diphtheria, Anthrax and Typhoid Fever.

My models have been continuously on exhibition in various parts of Ireland, from October, 1907, up to the present time, forming a part of the Tuberculosis Exhibition, carried on under the auspices of the Women's National Health Association. They are also to be found in the British Museum and in various other Museums in London and the English provinces. A collection of them has recently been acquired by the King Edward VII. National Memorial for the Prevention of Tuberculosis in Wales.

16. 1907.—Lecture on "Tuberculosis: Infection and Disinfection," delivered at the Tuberculosis Exhibition, held in Dublin, October, 1907. This lecture has been reprinted by the Women's National Health Association.
17. 1907.—I acted as one of the Vice-Presidents of the Congress of the Royal Sanitary Institute.

18. 1908.—I was deputed by the Connaught Tuberculosis Conference, over which the present Chairman of the Irish Insurance Commissioners presided to draw up a report on the Treatment of Consumption.
19. 1908.—Report on "Sanatoria and the Auxiliaries of Sanatorium Treatment," presented to a Conference of representatives of the various local authorities of Connaught, at their meeting held at Athlone, January 28, 1908.
20. 1909.—I gave a series of demonstrations on Tuberculosis at a National Conference for the prevention of Tuberculosis, which was held in London at the Caxton Hall.

HANDBOOK OF IRISH SANITARY LAW,

BY

C. L. BIRMINGHAM, M.D., D.P.H.,

Medical Officer of Health, Westport.

SOME REVIEWS OF ABOVE.

British Medical Journal, December 30, 1905 :—

“ The book will be found distinctly useful, as it supplies a want long recognised by those who have to deal with the Public Health Acts in Ireland. It will be of special value to those reading for public health diplomas. . . . The design of the book is well carried out, and the general literary style is good. The pages devoted to the history of Vaccination afford interesting reading. The tabular key which Dr. Birmingham has ingeniously constructed is of special value. . . . The intrinsic merit of Dr. Birmingham's handbook will not in any way be affected by the fact that he is a member of a family which has given to the profession of medicine in Ireland one of its most brilliant and useful members—the late Professor Ambrose Birmingham. THE SAME SPIRIT IS APPARENT IN THE WORK OF DR. CHARLES BIRMINGHAM, WHO HAS DEVOTED HIS ENERGY TO PRODUCING A WORK WHICH NOT ONLY IS CREDITABLE TO HIS CAPACITY AND ENERGY, BUT ALSO REFLECTS HONOUR ON THE POOR LAW MEDICAL SERVICE OF IRELAND, OF WHICH HE IS HIMSELF SO DISTINGUISHED A MEMBER.”

The Sanitary Record, October 26, 1905 :—

" The volume will be welcome as a concise compendium of the Public Health Law in and out of Ireland. It is entirely composed of official matter, and being free from the writer's own opinions (often a source of weakness to otherwise excellent books) may be consulted without fear of error. The result achieved is a handy and accessible book of reference for the use of all persons interested, officially or otherwise, in the care of the public health of Ireland. The volume is carefully indexed and there is an appendix of useful miscellaneous talks upon water, milk, and butter analysis."

Irish Independent, January 30, 1905 :—

"The above handbook should prove of great value to all who are interested in the administration of workhouses and of the Poor Law. To local authorities it is bound to be an almost indispensable volume. A copious and well arranged index is an admirable feature. . . ."

Irish Times, March 10, 1905 :—

" . . . Dr. Birmingham has done his work admirably. Though he is concise he is not obscure, and though he is dealing with technical matter still he remembers that the lay public most stands in need of being educated. . . . We may say further that the ordinary head of a household will find in this handbook much to instruct him."

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION FOR THE PREVENTION OF
TUBERCULOSIS. DUBLIN BRANCH.

1903.—Attention may also be drawn to the excellent leaflets issued by Dr. C. L. Birmingham, Medical Officer of Health, Westport, for circulation in his district, which have resulted in the people of that district being trained to ask for the disinfection of premises in every case where a person dies of Consumption. In Dublin the difficulty has been to induce people to consent to such disinfection by the Public Health authorities, and the success attained by Dr. Birmingham affords an excellent example of what can be accomplished by patient and systematic efforts to educate the public as to the infective nature of the disease and the necessity for precautions to prevent its spread. Such efforts might be made in each district in Ireland at a trifling cost, and this should be borne by the local sanitary authorities, and not, as is too often at present, left to the enterprise of individuals.

1904.—At the close of 1904, the Board of National Education sent to the Managers and Teachers of National Schools a notice relative to Hygiene and Tuberculosis, in which the Commissioners impressed on the Managers and Teachers the importance of using their best efforts to encourage the adoption of hygienic precautions calculated to reduce the excessive mortality from consumption. Reference is made in the notice to the Branch's pamphlet on *Consumption, and its Prevention*, which the Commissioners circulated in 1903, and the Teachers were urged to take frequent occasion of explaining to their pupils the necessity for the

observance of hygienic rules both in regard to Tuberculosis and to infectious diseases generally, Since the issue of this notice, the Commissioners of National Education have consented to send a poster relative to Consumption to every school under their supervision, provided the Branch supplies them with 10,000 copies. A poster, which is based on the simple hand-bill issued some time ago by Dr. C. L. Birmingham, of Westport, has accordingly been drawn up by the Branch. The proof was submitted to the Board and received their approval, and we recently supplied the 10,000 copies to the Board for circulation. The Committee trust that Managers and Teachers will see that the simple facts stated on the poster are impressed on the pupils, and that it may prove useful in the spread of knowledge regarding the prevention of the disease. The Committee thank the Board for their sympathy and help in regard to this matter, and Dr. C. L. Birmingham for his permission to use his hand-bill as the basis of the poster.

REFORMS CARRIED OUT IN THE WESTPORT UNION
DURING MY TENURE AS MEDICAL OFFICER
OF HEALTH, 1899-1908 :—

1. Arm-to-arm Vaccination superseded by Vaccination with Glycerinated Calf Lymph.
2. Maternity Nurses provided for each district in the Union on my initiative.
3. Adoption of the Infectious Diseases Notification and Prevention Acts, on my suggestion.

4. As a result of repeated reports from me, the Urban Council have now taken the necessary steps to secure an abundant supply of wholesome water for the district.

5. The name of the Westport Workhouse altered (for Registration purposes) to St. Vincent's House, Westport, on my recommendation.

6. Free disinfection for Consumption in all cases of deaths or removal. This has become an established practice in the district, and is fully availed of.

"GANNISTER DISEASE."

(A Pseudo-Tuberculosis Disease.)

Paper read by C. L. Birmingham, M.D., D.P.H.,
at the Congress of the Royal Sanitary Institute,
held at Southampton, September, 1899.

REFERENCES TO ABOVE PAPER.

1. By Sir James Crichton-Browne, M.D., LL.D.,
F.R.S. In the course of his presidential address to
the Congress of the Royal Sanitary Institute, held
in 1902, Sir James Crichton-Browne, having
selected as his subject, "The Dust Problem,"
said as follows:—

" . . . In endeavouring to elucidate the injury
done by dust as a mechanical irritant, I prefer to
select a small industry in which only one material
is dealt with by simple processes, and will therefore
direct your attention to Gannister dust and disease.

" It was a paper read by Dr. C. L. Birmingham
at the Congress of the Sanitary Institute, in 1899,
that first fixed attention pointedly on Gannister
Disease, *and that led to the searching investigation
into its nature and causes that has since taken place,*
and such an investigation was indeed inevitable
after Dr. Birmingham's statement that he could
find no record of a trade disease furnishing such
a high rate of mortality, which actually amounted
to 22·29 per 1,000 workers."

2. In *Hygiene and Public Health*, by Drs. Parkes and Kenwood, 3rd edition, which is probably the most widely read work on Hygiene, at page 185; there is the following reference:—

“ Dr. Birmingham has drawn attention to the great mortality among those engaged in the ‘Gannister’ industry. Gannister is a very hard silicious stone, with a very high fire-resisting capacity. . . .”

TESTIMONIALS FROM MY FORMER PROFESSORS.

Sir C. J. NIXON, Bart., M.D., &c., Vice-Chancellor, R.U.I.

I know Dr. Charles L. Birmingham intimately. He was my Resident Pupil at the Mater Misericordiæ Hospital in 1894, and he was also a member of my class at the School of Medicine.

I can give him the highest recommendation; both as regards his professional and personal merits. He possesses a high order of ability, he has always been a zealous and industrious worker, and he has acquired a thorough knowledge of both the practical and theoretical detail of Medicine and Surgery.

He will, I am sure, prove to be a careful and skilful practitioner.

Of Dr. Birmingham, personally, I can only say that he is everything that a member of my profession should be. He is a member of a clever family of brothers, and I don't think he will be the least distinguished amongst them.

January 2; 1899.

Professor E. J. McWEENEY, M.A., M.D., &c.

I have much pleasure in bearing testimony to the high personal character and professional attainments of Dr. Charles L. Birmingham.

I have been well acquainted with Dr. Birmingham

during his entire career as a student, and since he qualified by taking the Degrees of M.B., B.Ch., and B.A.O.—in the Royal University of Ireland—the standard of which is well known to be as high as that of any examining body in the kingdom, and higher than the majority.

Dr. Birmingham attended my courses of lectures on Pathology and Bacteriology, and I was greatly struck by his thoroughness and constant attention to work. As Resident Clinical Clerk, and subsequently as House Surgeon in the Mater Hospital (the largest in Ireland), he acquired great proficiency in the clinical aspect of medical work, and in the autopsy room and pathological laboratory of the hospital, I have often had occasion to remark the extent of his knowledge.

In the autumn of the year just expired, Dr. Birmingham returned to Dublin, and presented himself for the Examination for Degree of Doctor of Medicine at his University. He completely satisfied the Board of Examiners, received the Diploma at the public meeting of the University, and thereby set the seal of completeness on his medical studies.

I need hardly say that Dr. Birmingham is an accomplished physician and surgeon, and I have no hesitation of predicting for him a full measure of professional success.

January 1, 1899.

*Recent Testimonial from Professor H. KENWOOD,
University College, London.*

26th February, 1908.

I have pleasure in bearing testimony to the excellent qualifications which Dr. C. L. Birmingham

possesses for the post of Lecturer on Hygiene at the Catholic University Medical School, Dublin.

Dr. Birmingham was a most diligent and apt pupil in the Public Health Department at University College, under the late Professor Corfield and myself, where he took out an extended Course of Study in the years 1894 and 1899. During these periods he obtained a very sound and practical knowledge of Hygiene and Public Health, and of the branches of scientific work which are involved in their study and practice. In 1903 he obtained the Diploma of Public Health in Dublin; and since then I have reason to know that he has kept himself thoroughly up-to-date in Public Health matters, and especially in purely Preventive Medicine.

Dr. Birmingham's personal qualities also well fit him for the post; he is conscientious, thorough and tactful, and it is my impression that he would make a good teacher.

HENRY KENWOOD, M.B., D.P.H., F.C.S.

Chadwick Professor of Hygiene in the University of London; Fellow and Member of Council of the Royal Sanitary Institute; Medical Officer of Health and Public Analyst for the Metropolitan Borough of Stoke Newington, etc.

*Professor SIDNEY MARTIN, M.D., F.R.S., &c.,
University College, London.*

I beg to certify that in the summer session of 1898, Dr. Charles Leo Birmingham attended the course of Bacteriology in the Pathological Department of University College. This course includes the detailed study of the methods of research

and of the non-pathogenic and pathogenic micro-organisms.

Dr. Birmingham attended the class with great industry, and acquired a practical knowledge of Bacteriology which renders him competent to hold a post in which an expert knowledge of the subject is essential.

January 3, 1899.

The late Professor CORFIELD, Professor of Hygiene, University College, London.

I have much pleasure in certifying that Dr. Charles L. Birmingham worked for six months in the Hygienic Laboratory, in 1894, at the methods of analysis of water, air, foods, etc.

He also attended the demonstrations of sanitary appliances at the Parkes Museum and elsewhere, and accompanied me on visits of inspection to important sanitary works.

January 4, 1899.

The late Professor ANTONY ROCHE.

I have much pleasure in testifying to the zeal and ability of Dr. Charles L. Birmingham, M.D.

I knew him for some years as a student of the Catholic University Medical School, where he earned the respect and esteem of his teachers and fellow-students by his application and devotion to his medical studies.

He attended my lectures on Public Health, and

availed himself fully of the opportunities afforded him of acquiring knowledge in this important branch of medicine.

I have no doubt he would make an able and energetic Medical Officer of Health to any community.

He has obtained the difficult degree of M.D. of the Royal University of Ireland, with distinction,

October 18, 1899.

Professor KENWOOD, Professor of Hygiene, University College, London, formerly Assistant to Professor Corfield.

I have great pleasure in bearing my testimony to the good knowledge which Dr. Birmingham possesses of all matters relating to the Public Health.

He has worked diligently in the Public Health Laboratory of University College, and he has also followed my work as Medical Officer of Health during a period of some six months.

He has thus spared no pains to acquire a thorough practical knowledge of preventive medicine, and this knowledge will be of great service to him in any medical work in which he may be engaged.

I understand that he is a candidate for an important workhouse appointment. In my opinion he is very specially fitted to hold such a post.

He is a most agreeable colleague to work with, thorough, conscientious, able, and courteous; and he will be sure to prove himself a capable and popular officer.

December 30, 1898.

Dr. WM. GAYTON, Superintendent of North Western Fever Hospital, London.

I have much pleasure in stating that Dr. Charles Leo Birmingham has been attending the practice of this Hospital, during which time I have had ample opportunities of forming a good acquaintance with his abilities and general tendency to acquire and store knowledge.

His manner is such as to secure every confidence, and as a colleague I am certain he would be much appreciated.

Dr. Birmingham has taken much interest in the administration and general management of this Hospital, and in my opinion is admirably qualified to fill the office of Superintendent of a Fever Hospital, or Workhouse Hospital.

July 1, 1899.

Professor ALFRED J. SMITH, F.R.C.P., &c.

It gives me much pleasure to testify that I know personally for years Dr. Charles L. Birmingham; he was a most attentive student and he acquired by his industry a good sound practical knowledge of midwifery and of the diseases peculiar to women and children.

Since his entry to the profession, he has contributed some useful articles to the literature of the profession, and he has designed gynæcological appliances of much practical value.

I have, therefore, much pleasure in strongly recommending Dr. Birmingham for the important post he now seeks.

December 31, 1898.

CHRISTOPHER CHILDS, M.A., M.D., Lecturer on Bacteriology in relation to Public Health, University College, London.

Dr. Charles Leo Birmingham, has attended my course of lectures, demonstrations, and examinations on Bacteriology in relation to Public Health, and has been conspicuous amongst other medical gentlemen who were with him for the zeal and energy with which he has devoted himself to the work.

I have also had many opportunities of observing the ability and practical skill with which Dr. Birmingham has carried on the Bacteriological investigations which are required in a Fever Hospital.

July 1, 1899.

Sir WM. J. SMYLY, M.D., late Master, Rotunda Hospital, Dublin.

I have much pleasure in stating the high opinion that I formed of Dr. Charles L. Birmingham, during the time that he was a pupil in the Rotunda Hospital.

He was a very diligent and attentive student, and I believe him to be one of the best Obstetric and Gynæcological practitioners who passed through that institution during my term of office as Master, and I can therefore with confidence recommend him to any position in which a thorough practical knowledge of these subjects is required, and have no doubt that he would discharge the duties with credit and success.

*Right Rev. Dr. MOLLOY, Rector of the Catholic
University of Ireland.*

I have great pleasure in testifying that Dr. C. L. Birmingham read a distinguished course in the Royal University, of which he obtained the degree of M.D., and also the Diploma in Public Health.

I feel satisfied that Dr. Birmingham will discharge the duties of any post to which he may be appointed with zeal and efficiency.

(Signed), GERALD MOLLOY,
Rector.

November 25, 1904.

MEMORANDUM

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FROM	The Director, W.H.M.M.	TO	The Librarian, W.H.M.L.
date	3.4.50.	your memo dated	ref.

re

Herewith a pamphlet entitled
Writings, Reports and Researches of Dr. C.L.
Birmingham, Westport. I should be glad if
you would retain this as on p. 6 reference
is made to certain models, a number of which are
in this Museum.

Sir

Director.

